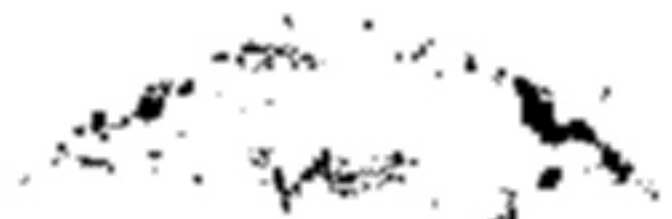


Tr. at War

Oct. 10. 1796

Indian Medals



184

War Office ^{the} 10 October 1896.

Sir

The President has lately given activity to certain measures calculated to introduce among some of the Indian Nations, South of the Ohio, a more improved state of agriculture, a greater attention to cattle-raising, and by means of their women, the art of spinning and weaving.

To favour this plan I have been directed to have medals struck emblematic of these objects and the end in view, to be bestowed, instead of war-medals, upon such as may appear to deserve them.

It was my intention to have had these medals struck at our mint; but upon enquiry I am induced to prefer having them done in England, as well on account of the workmanship as cheapness; and have therefore taken the liberty to request your kind Offices on the occasion.

I believe it would be some satisfaction to the President, were the assemblage of figures for the medals to be ^{designed} by Mr. Trumbull, and were the workmanship to correspond with the design. Will you therefore be so kind, at a moment of leisure to mention the thing to that gentleman, and the idea to be presented

by

185,

by the medal, or in case he should be absent, to some artist in his walk of genius. I should wish to have the legend, or on some part of the medal, the words, "Presidency. Geo. Washington.. 1796.."

As these medals may be used for the chiefs of all the Indians in friendship with the United States, you will oblige me by ordering seven hundred to be struck by Bolton of Birmingham who has reputation in that line; five hundred of which to be of silver, somewhat larger than a dollar in circumference and about the thickness of half a dollar, the remainder to be of copper and, if it will add to their beauty, thicker.

You will be pleased to direct them to be shipped to the Secretary of War and draw upon him for the amount, and to believe me to be very sincerely

Your obedient servant
James M. Henry

Refusing to sign

Indiana Historical Society Library Arthur G. Mitten Collection
Papers of the War Department 1784-1800

Secretary of War
October 10, 1796

Indian Medals

War Office
October 10, 1796

To: Rufus King, Esq.
[Ambassador to Britain]

Sir,

The President has lately given activity to certain measures calculated to introduce among some of the Indian Nations, South of the Ohio, a more improved state of agriculture, a greater attention to cattle raising, and by means of their women, the art of spinning and weaving.

To favor this plan I have been directed to have medals struck emblematic of these objects and the end in view, to be bestowed, instead of war medals, upon such as may appear to deserve them.

It was my intention to have had these medals struck at our own mint; but upon enquire I am induced to prefer having them done in England, as well on account of the workmanship as cheapness, and have therefore taken the liberty to request your kind offices on the occasion.

I believe it would be some satisfaction to the President, were the assemblage of figures for the medal to be formed by Mr. Trumbul, and were the workmanship to correspond with the design. Will you therefore be so kind, at a moment of leisure to mention the things to that gentleman, and the ideas to be presented by the medals, or in case he should be absent, to some artist in his walk of genius. I should wish to have the legend, or on some part of the medal, the words, "Presidency Geo. Washington...1796...."

As these medals may be used for the Chiefs of all the Indians in friendship with the United States, you will oblige me by ordering several hundred to be struck by Bolton of Birmingham who has a reputation in that line; five hundred of which to be of silver, somewhat larger than a dollar in circumference and about the thickness of half a dollar, the remainder to be of copper and, if it will add to their beauty, thicker.

You will be pleased to direct them to be shipped to the Secretary of War and draw upon him for the amount, and to believe me to be very sincerely,

Your obedient servant,
James McHenry

Indiana Historical Society Library Arthur G. Mitten Collection
Papers of the War Department 1784-1800

[Editorial Addenda concerning the requested medals]

Sold \$36,718.75

Lot Description

Extremely Rare Washington “Seasons” Indian Peace Medal

Designed by John Trumbull

The Shepherd

“1796” (1798) Washington Seasons Medal. The Shepherd. Silver. 48.2 mm. 46.7 grams, 719.3 grains. Julian IP-51, Baker-170, Prucha-37. Plain Edge. About Uncirculated.

Never mounted. An extraordinary specimen of one of the most notable American historical medals. It was designed by the great John Trumbull and struck in England at the mint of Boulton and Watt from dies by Conrad Küchler. Just 17 specimens of this medal were struck in the silver, unmounted format as offered here. This one remains in high grade, with prooflike fields on both obverse and reverse toned in lovely, subtle pastel blue, rose and gold. Deep gray and navy blue accents the rims. The eye appeal is superb, with excellent color, surface and originality. Only the lightest friction is seen, along with insubstantial handling. Minor hairlines are seen on both sides along with some trivial and shallow light scratches. A small group of contact marks are present in the central obverse field, below the tree's overhang. A thin, shallow hairline arcs from near the top of the leaning conifer to the hump of the cow. A single dig is noted on the right upright of N in PRESIDENCY on the reverse; the flaw below the right side of Y is a natural struck-through. A bruise on the edge near 5 o'clock is invisible from both obverse and reverse. This piece, given its lack of a mount, is unlikely to have been given to a Native American and instead probably survived in the cabinet of a VIP before being passed to future generations.

The Seasons medals, dated 1796 and named to the SECOND PRESIDENCY OF GEO:WASHINGTON, as inscribed on the reverse, were struck in 1798 while John Adams was president. They were chiefly distributed during Jefferson's administration, during the travels of Lewis and Clark, among others. Most of the mounted (or formerly mounted) specimens in both copper and silver show significant wear. Those that were never mounted typically survive in fairly high grade, including some that have remained in Gem condition by virtue of inclusion in cased sets; six were produced for Rufus King, the American minister to the Court of St. James, in 1799. One was sold in our (Bowers and Merena's) June 1984 sale of property from the estate of Virgil Brand.

Any Seasons medal in silver is a great rarity. Though each of the three types had mintages in silver of about 150 pieces with mounts and 17 without mounts (along with fewer in copper), principally copper examples have survived. The creative designs may have been appealing with Enlightenment era Anglo-Americans, but over the course of the previous century, Native Americans had grown accustomed to medals with large portraits of a king on the obverse. It seems likely the Seasons medals were traded in for other medals; it is just as likely that many were melted and never distributed at all. The Ford Collection, far and away the single largest grouping of Indian Peace medals ever assembled, included four silver Seasons medals. Ford II

(2004) included a well worn once-mounted Sower (also known as The Farmer), while Ford XVI (2006) included a mounted Shepherd (undergraded as Choice Very Fine), a mounted Sower (graded Very Fine), and a never-mounted Spinner in similar grade to this one. The Shepherd was the highest priced of them, selling for \$57,500 to a well known dealer.

The first reference to this medal type comes from an August 8, 1797, letter from the artist John Trumbull to Rufus King enclosing "slight sketches of three subjects for medals, in conformity to the request of the President as expressed to you by the Secretary of War [James McHenry]." The letter calls this design "No. 1" and describes it as follows: "Alludes to the raising of cattle -- a cow licking a young calf -- sheep and a lamb suckling -- a man in the character of a shepherd watching them -- a small house and trees in the distance." Perhaps the most important historical document referring to these medals comes from the journals of Lewis and Clark in an entry from August 17, 1805, which describes the distribution of gifts that day. Cameahwait, the brother of Sacagawea, received a small size Jefferson Indian Peace medal, along with a coat, shirt, scarlet leggings, tobacco, "and some small articles." The entry continues:

"Each of the other chiefs received a small medal struck during the presidency of General Washington, a shirt, handkerchief, leggings, a knife and some tobacco. Medals of the same sort were also presented to the young warriors who, though not chiefs, were promising youths, and very much respected in the tribe."

Though rarer than Jefferson Indian Peace medals, silver Seasons medals enjoy much of the same history but less modern popularity. Most survivors are not aesthetic prizes, but this example offers superlative visual appeal, showcasing Trumbull's design to perfection. It is a museum quality monument to the very earliest efforts at establishing diplomacy between Native Americans and the infant United States.